



February 2, 2016

The Honorable Geoffrey Hansen
State Senator
P.O Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909

RE: Wheels to Work – Vehicle Donation Tax Credit

Dear Senator Hansen:

Goodwill Industries of Central Michigan's Heartland, Inc (GICMH) purpose is "Changing Lives Through the Power of Work" by helping individuals overcome barriers to employment. One of the primary barriers for Michigan citizens living in poverty is the lack of reliable, convenient and affordable transportation. GICMH has operated our Wheels to Work program since August 2001. There has been one constant during that time frame, demand for reliable transportation has always far outstripped supply and the trend is getting worse. A variety of factors have contributed to this situation; changes to Federal and State laws which have negatively impacted the deductibility or tax credit associated with a vehicle donation to a qualified program; "Cash for Clunkers," a Federal program designed to stimulate the US economy by bolstering new car sales by offering incentives for citizens to scrap their low fuel economy cars for new ones; and finally, local municipal bus programs that do not operate close to all citizens or service key employment centers during second or third shift hours. These factors have created an environment which has resulted in our Wheels to Work program receiving fewer vehicle donations each year couple with a decline in the quality of those donations.

From January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2015 GICMH's Wheels to Work program received 324 donated vehicles, many of which were not roadworthy or repairable at a reasonable cost and needed to be scrapped. This past year only 30% of the vehicles donated were of a condition that made necessary repair costs, in order to bring the vehicle up to program standards for placement, financially viable. Over that same period our program received 7,984 calls or walk in inquiries requesting vehicle assistance. We continue to develop marketing programs to educate potential donors in the hopes of increasing the number and quality of vehicle donations. If we can raise the donation base and quality of the vehicles donated, we will improve our capability to assist more families in obtaining or maintaining employment.

I have included some testimonials from two of our Wheels to Work vehicle recipients which highlight the positive effect that roadworthy transportation has had on their families. I urge you and your colleagues to support approval of a \$100 tax credit to vehicle donors to a qualified program. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to assist you in bringing this issue to a successful conclusion for the residents of the great State of Michigan.

Sincerely,

Kenneth C. Bauer

Kenneth C. Bauer
President / CEO

4820 Wayne Road, Battle Creek, MI 49037
269.788.6500



To Whom it May Concern;

Before receiving the Wheels to Work vehicle, life without a car was difficult; then you add children to the equation and it worsens. Sacrifices become more and more frequent, such as, "Do I take my child to a doctor appointment today or do I go into work?" or "Do I go to my son's baseball game or use the last bus run to get groceries for the week?" My case, like my others, was extremely rough because we do not live on the bus line. So making any doctor appointments or dental appointments, or picking up prescriptions, or even simply getting a gallon of milk can turn into a three to four hour task. It sometimes also depends on someone else's generosity to take you, when that person may be going out of his or her way to help a friend or loved one.

Living away from the bus line is extremely hard without a personal vehicle. I remember several times in the winter of 2013 where my children and I would have to walk down a busy main street without any sidewalks and little room between us and fast-moving traffic. These missions we set out on were not something we could just reschedule or put off until it was more convenient. These were custody battles for my children's safety and overall wellbeing. There were times we did not have adequate clothing for the weather we faced, and times we were also splashed with freezing cold slush from the traffic. I also had to carry two kids at once because they were just so worn out from the distance we needed to walk and the conditions from the weather. Many times I would have to give my kids motivational speeches and make promises to keep them moving to our destination. I would have to keep talking just to keep them occupied and distracted with something other than our destination and how far we still had until we reached the bus stop. Even six months after having our new car, I still hear my kids in the back when we pass the courthouse or certain bus stops. They talk about "How glad I am that we don't have to walk anymore because of our new Station Wagon" and how we should take care of our car so we never have to walk again. So I know my kids are just as grateful as I am for the Goodwill Wheels to Work program, if not more.

Participant 1

To Whom It May Concern;

For months leading up to my car finally breaking down for good, I had issues with it left and right. My fiancée has had horrible back problems for the last five years, which led to multiple spinal surgeries. He has had to jump through hoops to get approved for disability. Because he has been unable to work, I have been the sole income in our household and I don't make a lot of money. Our household includes the two of us, his two children, and our daughter. Altogether, a household of five is a lot to support on one income.

Even the little problems with the car were problematic to fix on one income, so when it finally died for the last time, I was heartbroken. If I couldn't pay to fix the smaller problems, how could I fix it now? How could I afford to get another car? I don't have good credit, so a loan was out of the question, and I had no money saved up since my family lives paycheck-to-paycheck. I begged and pleaded with my family and friends for help, for a vehicle to use and I would pay what I could so that I could get to work. My job was our only income and I could not afford to lose it. We'd be completely destroyed, we would have no roof over our heads, and I could not live with being that much of a disappointment to our family, as they were my responsibility.

None of my family would or could help, but I was extremely lucky enough to have a friend who worked and lived nearby, who offered to drive me to and from work until I could find a solution. I live fairly far away from my job--each day is at least 40 miles roundtrip. I was grateful to have a ride; however, there were also doctor's appointments that I had to cancel or reschedule time and again for my fiancée and daughter's health issues, simply because I did not have a car.

After exhausting several last-ditch efforts to find a car, I was becoming desperate. I heard about Goodwill Wheels to Work and thought, "What do I have to lose?" It took a while for all the paperwork to go through, but after a few months, I finally had my very own car again. I cannot tell you the sheer joy I have in having my own vehicle again. The freedom was amazing. Not only could I go to and from work again, but I could go pick up groceries when they were needed without begging for a ride. I could run up to the store for diapers, I could take my family to the doctor, and I could do all of this without the embarrassment of having to ask for more help. The independence, the freedom, the joy of having a car is beyond words. I will never be able to show Goodwill Wheels to Work as much gratitude as they deserve for the amazing work they do. If it were not for them, I would be out of work and my family would be on the street. Thank you so much for helping my family and saving my job.

Participant 2